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ABSTRACT

An administrative manual prepared in compliance with the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, and to supplement the State Plan, was distributed to all local educational agencies in Missouri to communicate the need for actively encouraging the enrollment in school of homeless children and youth. The manual includes the following: a summary of the numbers of homeless children and youth in the state and of the identified barriers to education; an explanation of the state's compulsory attendance laws and other laws and court decisions relating to residency, school attendance, and enrollment; a description of policies and procedures to be followed to assure services to homeless children and youth are comparable to services available to other students; and awareness activities, instructional strategies, and classroom and school activities designed to help improve the effectiveness of education to homeless children and youth. (LB)

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MEETING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF MISSOURI'S HOMELESS CHILDREN

ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL & CENSUS REPORT

AUGUST 1990

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

ROBERT E. BARTMAN, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

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This manual was prepared under a grant from the
United States Department of Education
in compliance with the Stewart B. McKinney Act.
The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
wishes to especially thank the Iowa Department of Education
for their assistance in developing the
intervention strategies for effectively dealing with
homeless children and youth.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Title VII-B, Education for Homeless Children and Youth, of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (P.L. 100-97) provides state educational agencies with grant funds to carry out policies to ensure that homeless children and youth have access to a free, appropriate public education which would be provided to the children of a resident of a state and is consistent with the state's school attendance laws. Funds are also to be used to review and revise the residency requirements of compulsory school attendance laws to assure that homeless children within the state are afforded a free and appropriate education.

Under the McKinney Act, each state is required to:

--carry out activities to ensure homeless children and youth are afforded a free and appropriate education

--establish an Office of Coordinator of Education of Homeless Children and Youth whose functions are to carry out activities required by the McKinney Act, including the development and implementation of a State Plan.

Activities of the State Plan

In carrying out its responsibilities under the Stewart B. McKinney Act, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends that **local educational agencies appoint a local coordinator for homeless children and youth**. This person should be responsible for ensuring that local policies regarding homeless children and youth do not cause a barrier to immediate access to education. The local coordinator should also develop and implement grievance procedures for disputes which may arise in the placement of a homeless student. Detailed information about resolving placement disputes can be found elsewhere in this manual (page 7).

Local districts should also comply with the following requirements of the State Plan adopted by the State Board of Education:

- The LEA must continue the homeless child's or youth's education in the school district of origin for the remainder of the year, or enroll the child in the district in which he or she is actually living, whichever is in the child's or youth's best interest.

- The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth is living with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere by the parents.

- The LEA must provide to the homeless child or youth services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected including educational services for which the child meets

the eligibility criteria, such as compensatory educational programs for the disadvantaged; educational programs for the handicapped; programs for students with limited English proficiency; programs in vocational education; programs for the gifted and talented; and school meals programs.

- The LEA must maintain appropriate school records for each homeless child or youth and make the records available in a timely fashion when the child or youth enters a new school district.

As one of the activities of the State Plan, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is distributing to all local educational agencies this administrative manual to communicate the need for actively encouraging the enrollment in school of homeless children and youth. This manual includes: a summary of the numbers of homeless children and youth in Missouri and of the identified barriers to education; an explanation of the State's compulsory attendance laws and other laws and court decisions relating to residency, school attendance and enrollment; a description of policies and procedures to be followed to assure services to homeless children and youth are comparable to services made available to other students; and awareness activities, instructional strategies, and classroom and school activities designed to assist in improving the effectiveness of education to homeless children and youth.

CENSUS RESULTS

Missouri's Homeless Children and Youth

On November 9, 1988, the homeless children and youth that could be identified in shelters, community agencies and through local law enforcement offices and Division of Youth staff were counted. On this night, 593 children and youth were served by the 59 shelters which responded. Using statistical projections, it was estimated that the actual number of homeless children and youth in the State during the year was somewhere between 6,500 and 8,000.

Similarly, on November 14, 1989, an updated census of homeless children and youth was obtained. Sixty questionnaires reported data on organized private shelters and transitional housing services. By a very conservative definition of homelessness, 776 children were counted as present in a shelter on that evening. This represents a 29% increase over the 1988 census figure. Additionally, shelter operators knew of at least 103 siblings of these homeless children who had been left elsewhere by their parents before the family entered the shelter. On an annualized basis, this represents 10,261 children who spent some nights out of the year in a Missouri shelter for the homeless.

The Department will conduct another census in November of 1990, to determine if Missouri is experiencing an increase in homeless children over a two-year period.

Barriers to Education

During the 1988 census, shelter providers and community agencies were asked to respond to a series of statements regarding the barriers to education which they felt were most prevalent among the clients they served. The barriers identified as most severe were: uncertainty about the future; lack of money; lack of permanent housing; frequent moves; low self-esteem; and family instability. Other factors also considered to be very significant barriers are listed in the chart on page 4.

According to parents and shelter workers, there are three areas where school policies seem to affect homeless children and families. These include residency requirements and the access to information about them, transportation requirements and the inherent scheduling demands they pose for school districts, and the cost to homeless parents of providing school materials. Misinformation about residency requirements is common. Parents who become homeless often do not know how residency requirements affect their child's school assignment. Delays in providing school transportation often result in school absences of 5-10 days. These delays are reportedly related to the processing time required for the school district to contact the transportation service with which they contract and to arrange for a child to be picked up at a new location. The cost of providing school materials is especially burdensome to a homeless parent who has little or no money and is under great pressure to save enough money to arrange permanent housing so they can move the family out of the shelter.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Identified by Parents and Staff from Shelters and Community Action Agencies
Ranked in Order of Perceived Severity

School Related Barriers	Shelter Related Barriers	Family Related Barriers	Social & Emotional Barriers	Physical Barriers
Poor reading, writing and math skills	Lack of privacy	Lack of money	Low self esteem	Lack of medical care
Falling behind grade level	Lack of help with homework	Lack of permanent housing	Emotional trauma	Lack of personal hygiene
Lack of transportation	Lack of space to study	Frequent moves	Lack of self-confidence	Lack of sleep
Lack of clothing for school	Too much noise	Family instability	Depression	Hunger
Behavior problems	Lack of homework materials	Family violence or abuse	Not feeling safe	Substance abuse
Cost of school supplies	Shelter is far from friends	Parent(s) looking for job(s)	Unhappiness	
Developmental delays	Shelter is far from school	Parents don't have enough time for their kids	Mental health problems	
Problems getting immunizations	Lack of access to a telephone	Having to care for siblings		
Problems transferring between schools		Other transportation difficulties		
Attendance rules		Illiteracy of parents		
Learning disability		Problems obtaining public assistance		
Residency requirements		Parents keep children out of school		
Child dislikes school				
Fear of school				
Attitudes of classmates				

Recommendations

To the extent possible, the local coordinator of homeless children and youth should plan ways in which to inform school personnel about the extent of homelessness among the children and youth in the State and the local community. They should also be informed about the problems which may hinder homeless students in benefitting fully from their education. Much can be accomplished by developing a greater sensitivity to the plight of these children on the part of teachers, counselors and school administrators. Activities should be developed and implemented that remove the effects of these barriers.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AND RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS

Compulsory School Attendance Law

The Missouri compulsory attendance law requires the parent, guardian, or person in charge of a child between the ages of seven and sixteen to be responsible for seeing that the child regularly attends school. Exceptions to this law are limited and apply only to those children who are determined to be physically or mentally incapacitated, or who are receiving instruction at home in a bona fide home school. (RSMo. Section 167.031, subsection 1). **Homeless children and youth are not legally exempt from regular school attendance.**

Residency Requirements

State Law. Orphan children, children with only one parent living, and children whose parents do not contribute to their support--if the children are between the ages of six and twenty years and are unable to pay tuition--may attend the schools of any district in the state in which they have a permanent or temporary home without paying a tuition fee (RSMo. Section 167.151, subsection 2). **Homeless children and youth are entitled to attend school in a district in which they are temporarily residing.**

Federal Guidelines Regarding Temporary Homes. A temporary home is defined as a nighttime residence in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter for temporary accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing), an institution providing temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, Section 103 (a)).

Related Court Decisions. In **Martinez v. Bynum**, the United States Supreme Court determined that in order for a person under the age of 18 years to establish a residence for the purpose of attending the public free schools separate and apart from his parent, guardian, or other person having lawful control of him, it must be established that his presence in the school district is not for the primary purpose of attending the public free schools.

In **Horton v. Marshall Public Schools**, the United States Eighth Circuit Court of found that a district's policy of excluding minor children from school unless the child has a parent or legal guardian living in the district violates the equal protection and due process clauses.

In **Doe v. Phyler**, the United States Supreme Court determined that an undocumented alien may attend school in the district in which he or she resides, even if there illegally.

These decisions indicate that homeless children have the right to attend school wherever they reside. Requirements based on the parents' proof of residency in the district should be revised or updated to ensure that no child is denied access to education in the district in which he or she resides permanently or temporarily.

Consideration should be given to the fact that homeless youth often live temporarily with friends in preference to shelters. For the truly homeless family, proof of living in a district (such as a telephone or utility receipt, lease, or other such forms) is difficult, if not impossible, to produce. Telephone contact with the current or previous shelter personnel should provide documentation that a family is truly homeless and not able to show actual proof of residence.

Other Regulations

Eligible Pupil Funding. When asked, school administrators indicated that the effect of homeless children in the school district on State funding is a major concern. The high mobility and transiency of homeless families does have an impact on a district's eligible pupil funding. It is, of course, in a district's best interest to have the homeless child enrolled and attending during the count periods (September and January). However, the district will receive credit for the hours attended by the homeless children, no matter when they are in attendance.

Truancy. Missouri law requires that any parent, guardian or other person having charge, control or custody of a child, who violates the provisions of the State's compulsory attendance law (described on page 6) is guilty of a class C misdemeanor. A certificate stating that the child is regularly attending a public, private, parochial or parish school and properly attested by the superintendent, principal or person in charge of the school is prima facie evidence of regular attendance by the child (RSMo Section 167.061). The state commissioner of education, superintendents of schools, school boards, county superintendents of public welfare, and every school attendance and probation officer shall enforce all laws relating to compulsory attendance. (RSMo section 167.111)

School district personnel are encouraged to establish relationships with area emergency shelter and housing programs to assist in ensuring the regular school attendance of the children living in the shelters, and to prevent violations of the compulsory school attendance laws.

PROCEDURES FOR EDUCATING HOMELESS STUDENTS

Deciding Which Local Educational Agency Should Enroll

Due to the fact that homeless families move from district to district or to different attendance areas within a district, the children are often denied access to their original school of attendance. This often causes problems because the child looks to his familiar school for the security that eludes him in his homeless state, while the school of origin believes that funding for the child ceases when he moves away and arrangements for transportation become complicated.

The local coordinator of homeless children and youth has the responsibility to resolve disputes regarding the educational placement of the homeless child. If the dispute exists between districts, the local coordinators should work together to make the placement based on the interests of the child. Factors to consider in any placement decision include length of time already spent in a school, availability or access to special programs which may improve the child's success in school, the probable location of future permanent residency, and transportation of the child. Schools are encouraged to develop a policy to expedite this process.

In those situations where agreement cannot be reached regarding the placement of a homeless student, the involved parties should notify the Coordinator of School Services for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regarding the circumstances of the placement, steps taken and reasons for the disagreement. A decision regarding the placement of the student will then be made by the Coordinator or his designated representative. The school district in which the student initially enrolled will continue to provide all applicable educational services for which the child or youth is eligible until a final determination is reached.

Providing Comparable Services in Special Programs

Children who suffer the effects of homelessness are often moved from place to place, town to town, and school to school. As a result of the rapidly changing and transient lifestyle imposed upon them, these children may not receive the special services to which they are entitled, or for which they have great need. Such programs may include: special education, gifted education, compensatory education, vocational education, school meal programs, and programs for students with limited English proficiency. It is the position of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that eligible children are entitled to such services, regardless of the permanency of their residence in the district.

Special Education. When a homeless student with a suspected handicap enrolls in a district but does not have copies of the evaluation and IEP, the local school district shall seek information to determine the need for special education. District officials shall conduct interviews with the student, the student's parent/legal guardian, and officials of the school district in which the student was previously enrolled.

If the results of the interviews produce sufficient information to reasonably suspect that the student requires special education services, the local school district shall develop an interim IEP and offer an appropriate special education placement according to the following procedures:

1. the IEP committee shall review all available assessment data pertaining to the student obtained from intervies with the child, parent, and previous school district officials;

2. the school district shall request copies of the student's evaluation and IEP from the school district in which the child was previously enrolled;

3. the IEP committee shall develop an interim IEP consistent with the requirements of Section IV, Individualized Education Program;

4. the IEP committee shall offer an interim placement (such placement should not exceed thirty (30) calendar days);

5. the local school district/public agency shall obtain written consent for initial placement from the parent/legal guardian, as required in Section V, Procedural Safeguards; and,

6. the IEP shall be reviewed at the conclusion of the interim placement and finalized after full review of the multidisciplinary evaluation data received from the former school district.

(State Plan for the Education of the Handicapped Act, Part B, P.L. 94-142)

Gifted Education. Homeless children may be denied access to placement in a state-assisted gifted program due to the testing that is involved for identification purposes. In order to simplify the procedure, districts are encouraged to avoid duplication of testing, using whatever information is available from the previous school. Also, care must be taken to inform classroom teachers of the characteristics of gifted children and to include these teachers in the identification process. Homeless gifted children will probably not be easily identified in the traditional manner; therefore, more reliance must be placed on the classroom teacher and the parents.

Compensatory Education. Educationally deprived homeless children attending schools that have Chapter 1 projects are eligible for participation provided they meet the same educational criteria as other children in the school. However, given the lack of a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence, homeless children attending non-Chapter 1 schools cannot meet the eligibility requirement that they reside in a project area and would, in effect, be precluded from receiving Chapter 1 services. To ensure that these children, who may be among the most needy, are not denied services because of an eligibility requirement they cannot meet, local districts may serve educationally deprived homeless children without regard to the residency requirement. (Chapter 1 Policy Manual)

Vocational Education. As disadvantaged individuals, homeless students may benefit from vocational programs that help them make the transition from school to employment or further training. The Carl D. Perkins Act helps schools provide additional services which are essential if disadvantaged individuals are to participate in vocational programs. Such services may include:

1. guidance, counseling, career development and placement services;
2. vocational resource educators;
3. basic skills instructors;
4. supplemental professional instructors; and
5. vocational teacher aides.

School Meal Programs. Due to the financial situation that causes homelessness in the State, most children and youth who can be identified as homeless qualify for free or reduced meal programs. Efforts should be made to ensure that the families of these children understand their likely eligibility for these programs, and that the forms are made available to them upon enrollment.

Limited English Proficiency. Some homeless children may also be immigrant and refugee children who have a native language or home language which is other than English. If they are achieving below their peers in school they are considered "limited English proficient" (LEP). The Civil Rights Act and subsequent court rulings have stated that appropriate steps must be taken to identify LEP children and provide assistance which would enable them to develop their English language and academic skills. Equal access to education for these language minority students as defined by the court, cannot simply be interpreted as non-English speaking students being placed in the same classrooms under the same instruction with English proficient students. The Supreme Court has also ruled that districts must admit both legal and illegal aliens who are residing in their districts without regard to their legal status. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education can provide technical assistance to administrators and teachers serving LEP students, whether they are permanent or temporary residents of the school district.

Providing Comparable Services in Regular Programs

Homeless students are often denied access to programs which are made available to other students. These programs may include, but are not limited to: counseling programs, elective classes, incentive grant programs, fine arts classes, and industrial arts classes. Homeless students should be given the opportunity to participate in all programs made available within the school. In the case of a homeless student who is a member of a minority group, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that these students may not be discriminated against in the assignment to schools, classes, programs, or activities.

Testing

Testing of homeless students should be done as quickly as possible, when the need becomes apparent for such testing. Efforts should be made, however, to avoid duplication of recent testing done in a previous district. Districts are

encouraged to obtain all relevant information about prior testing (if available) before proceeding with the testing. Possible methods of obtaining this information include phone contact with the previous school, interviewing the parents and/or student, and review of any available records which may indicate test results. Other valuable information can be obtained quickly through informal assessment procedures, including interviews, oral readings and other techniques used by school counselors, special education teachers and Chapter 1 teachers.

Maintaining and Sharing Appropriate School Records

It is recommended that schools use care in maintaining records on children identified as homeless. Given the transiency of homeless families, these records may be of great value to both future districts the student may attend, and to the initial district, should the student return. The availability of records to requesting school districts should be handled as expeditiously as possible. We recommend that school districts use such avenues as the telephone, FAX machines and express mail services for verification of test scores, immunization records, and program eligibility, with the understanding that for those records transferred by electronic means, a hard copy of the document will be mailed as quickly as possible.

Transportation

The placement decision of a homeless student must include consideration of the best interest of the child. Most research concludes that the emotional impact of homelessness will be lessened if the child is allowed to remain in the school of origin. Whenever possible, transportation of the student back to his or her original school is encouraged.

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Educational

Problems:

- Lack of a proper, quiet place to study
- Lack of adequate materials
- Lack of assistance with homework assignments and studying
- Delays in language and/or motor development
- Parent's lack of basic education

Intervention strategies:

- Provide a place to study, materials, and perhaps personal assistance—before and after school
- Provide tutorial and remedial assistance during weekdays and on weekends via an open learning/study center
- Communicate personally with parents on a regular basis regarding problems in the school setting and problems or strengths of the academic ability of the student
- Provide home-based tutorial assistance for children
- Provide training for parents on how to help their children
- Provide for substitute home study situations
- Encourage children and families to use the available facilities and programs
- Develop peer tutoring, mentor, and buddy system programs

Physical Health

Problems:

- Lack of sleep
- Hunger
- Unattended medical problems
- Unrecognized sensory problems (i.e. vision, hearing)
- Low levels of personal hygiene
- Lack of adequate clothing or changes of clothing

Intervention strategies:

- Sleep must come before productive classroom participation is possible—allow rest to occur
- Provide free breakfast and lunch programs for children, or maintain minimum food supplies in classrooms or other areas to supplement children who are hungry
- Identify, teach and encourage children and families to use community sponsored food programs
- Notify the school nurse to monitor and provide for the health needs the homeless student
- Make accommodations in school schedules to allow health services and mental health services to be provided
- Refer chronic cases to health and mental health professionals
- Provide a place for students to bathe
- Provide encouragement, counseling and assistance in personal hygiene
- Offer personal hygiene products to students as a part of every classroom or through a center in the school
- Provide clothing for students on an individual, private basis
- Maintain special funds through donations to help children buy necessary clothing
- Observe student regularly to note any unusual changes in behavior which may indicate specific needs

Mental and Emotional Health

Problems:

- Low self-esteem
- Emotional trauma experienced by children from both the family and other children
- Lack of trust in and respect for authority figures
- Exhibition of coping strategies (thumb sucking, temper tantrums, extreme shyness, lying, stealing, agression-both verbal and physical, unpredictable swings in moods or emotions)
- Long lasting feelings of depression or unhappiness

Intervention strategies:

- Build self-confidence by giving additional reassurance and responsibilities

- Respect the privacy needs of the child and family
- Do not reveal the homeless situation to other children unnecessarily
- Provide a place for students to vent their anger and someone to listen, counsel students on how to handle harassment, provide group counseling or provide classroom discussion of parent/child relations
- Provide for human development in curriculum for all children
- Provide units of instruction in social studies on homelessness
- Have instructors use patience and persistence in trying to help, offer repetitive support without withdrawing
- Follow-up on absenteeism immediately
- Provide encouragement and assistance to get to school
- Visit shelters, or wherever parents can be located, to help overcome barriers
- Contact community support persons and school social workers to assist getting children to school
- Redirect inappropriate coping behavior as quickly as possible via personal counseling or other services depending on the behavior—children should be made aware when their behavior is inappropriate
- When necessary, other students should be counseled on problem situations and engaged to help change the behavior
- Consider starting a support group for homeless students which emphasizes role playing to practice coping skills
- To overcome depression and feelings of unhappiness, offer individual counseling, before and/or after school teacher chats, peer friendship, encouragement and involvement in physical activity

School System

Problems:

- Lack of transportation to school and after hours opportunities
- Lack of immunization records
- Lack of school records
- School missed due to childcare needs

- Cost of school supplies, fees, and extracurricular events is greater than family can pay

Intervention strategies:

- Transport children to their home school ensuring stability throughout a school year
- Provide copies of school records to parents to take to other schools to facilitate enrollment
- Accept students into school program with or without past school records—request records from past schools after enrollment
- Provide catch-up help for students who have fallen behind academically because of moving
- Provide child care services
- Arrange for other community agencies to provide for child care
- Hold clinics to start immunizations before students start school at the preschool or kindergarten level
- Enroll students and request immunization records afterwards
- Enroll students and start immunizations at the same time
- Coordinate services with the Department of Health clinics to provide immunizations so school programs of individual students are not interrupted
- Contact community shelters and display school information and contact person within the shelters to encourage public school enrollment
- Provide alternative schooling within the shelter or an alternative setting more acceptable to the children
- Take steps to protect children if behavior is interpreted as possibly leading the child into endangerment (walking home late and alone, or through a heavy-crime area)
- Provide supplies to facilitate their involvement
- Maintain an assistance fund to provide grants to children and families for supplies, travel, fees, etc.

APPENDIX A

CENSUS OF MISSOURI HOMELESS CHILDREN

This report was prepared by the University of Missouri-Columbia Human Development State Extension Staff and the Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis under a contract with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in compliance with the Stuart B. McKinney Act.

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REPORT ABSTRACT

Missouri Census of 1989 Homeless Children

This report describes the process of documenting the number of Homeless children in Missouri counted in organized public and private settings on the night of November 14, 1989. In addition, services provided by the shelters and a summary of actual children counted by age, race and educational status are included. Ninety-six census questionnaires were returned. Data from 16 Human Development Corporation/Community Action Programs gave reports of services offered, but had no children present on the night of November 14. The remaining 80 constitute the data pool.

Sixty questionnaires reported data on organized private shelters and transitional housing services. Data from 15 respondents were from HDC/CAPS shelters, and 5 questionnaires were returned from persons reporting mainly rural, informal temporary shelter settings.

-By a very conservative definition of homelessness, 776 children were counted as present in a shelter by 8:00 p.m. on November 14, 1989. This represents a 29% increase over the 1988 census figure.

-On an annualized basis, this represents 10,126 children who spend some nights out of every year in a Missouri shelter for the Homeless.

-Included in this census were 78 unaccompanied minors

-46% of these Homeless children are under 5 years of age.

-Shelter operators knew of at least 103 siblings of these homeless children who had been left elsewhere by their parents before the family entered the shelter.

-Of 372 children aged 5 and older - 19% were not in attendance in school on November 14th.

-79 teenage parents were reported to be in shelters. They were accompanied by 80 children.

-In addition to the homeless children counted in the shelters on the night of November 14, respondents reported that they had to refuse service to 173 families with 250 children during the previous 24 hours. While these families may be included in the shelter census if they arrived at a facility with openings by 6 p.m. on November 14, it still represents an alarming number of children and families still searching for shelter on <u>one</u> day in Missouri.

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THE STEWART B. MCKINNEY DEFINITION OF HOMELESS

The definition used to establish who is "homeless" according to the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act specifically refers to a "homeless individual" as:

> (1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence or,
>
> (2) an individual who has primary night-time residence that is in:
>
> (a) a supervised or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill);
>
> (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized;
>
> (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (Public Law 100-77 July 22, 1987).

This definition of the homeless was used to facilitate a conservative counting of children in Missouri who were homeless and in a supervised public or privately operated shelter designed as temporary living accommodations for homeless persons or temporary living accommodations for the public used to house homeless people only on an individual family case basis.

In discussion with personnel completing the census, it was agreed that the census would not include children who were currently residing in shelters primarily occupied by victims of domestic abuse.

As such this is a conservative definition of the most visible sample of the homeless children population in Missouri.

1989 CLIMATE OF SOCIAL CONCERN REGARDING HOMELESSNESS

As the country prepares for the 1990 National Census and procedures are developed for counting homeless individuals, it is clear that many formal systems are aware of the homeless as a population needing a whole range of services. While the media has increasingly responded with a variety of news items about the increasing numbers of homeless persons, the private sector has likewise responded with efforts at the local, regional, and state levels. The Missouri Governor's Task Force on homelessness has met regularly and developed some ambitious goals to reduce homelessness in Missouri. The Missouri Coalition for the Homeless has held a series of public meetings and advocacy activities for this population. A variety of service organizations, churches and school classes have participated in projects to raise funds, renovate buildings or increase awareness of needs of the homeless. The October National March for Housing Now in Washington D.C. increased visibility and concern for the changing nature of the homeless population.

Increasingly more Americans are realizing that the population of homeless includes families (most often single mothers with children) as the most rapidly increasing category of homeless persons, and that the most fundamental

contributing factor to the rise of homelessness in this country is the destruction of low-rent housing, however minimal in quality. The number of units that formerly housed low income people in this country has been dramatically reduced in the last 10 years. This has had major impact on the greater visibility of children in the ranks of homeless.

The 1988 Missouri Homeless Census

The 1988 Missouri Census of Homeless Children provided qualitative and quantitative data about the issue in Missouri. A minimum of 600 children slept in shelters on the night the census was taken. Evidence was given for the disruption of children's participation in schools and the assault to self-esteem and feelings of incompetence, anger and depression among both children and adults was poignantly illustrated.

Half of the children were of preschool age and had no program to occupy them during the day while the parents attempted to obtain resources to move the family through a period of homelessness. Little evidence could be found for where the adolescent children of homeless families reside. In light of the excellent nature of 1988's qualitative data, it was not deemed necessary or appropriate to spend money on a second qualitative study. Therefore, readers are referred to the Missouri State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Director of Homeless programs to obtain a copy of last year's more extensive report.

College of Human Environmental Sciences Concern For Homelessness

The College of Human Environmental Sciences has as its mission the research, education, and service to families and those professionals serving families in their significant social, psychological, economic and material environments. It is thus especially appropriate that the faculty of the College of Human Environmental Sciences completed the 1989 census of homeless children. Faculty in the Departments of Housing and Environmental Design, Human Development and Family Economics and Management have all been supportive in the development of the questionnaire and the completion of the census process.

In addition the Human Environmental Science Extension faculty work closely with the state office of 4-H and Youth Development who share a common concern for the quality of life for children who are homeless. Extension professionals from both organizations are already engaged in educational projects with the homeless population in a variety of shelters and service agencies throughout the state. Their commitment to assisting in the census was a significant factor in its successful completion.

IMPACT OF THE 1989 DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION STATE PLAN

As a result of the 1988 Census of Homeless Children, the Missouri State Department of Elementary and Secondary Education published a state plan which included provisions for more appropriate residency requirements and the easing of barriers in access to education for children caught in the homeless population. A significantly supportive position taken by the department requested the

appointment of a local coordinator for homeless children whose duty was to facilitate the ongoing educational enrollment of homeless children in the district.

Particularly sensitive was the recommendation that a child's enrollment be continued in the school district of origin or changed to the district of the shelter of residence, whichever action was most supportive of the development and stability of that child and family. In addition, the report facilitated an awareness campaign in local school districts to create more understanding about the prevalence and needs of homeless children. Throughout the process of taking the 1989 census, shelter personnel expressed appreciation for the quality of the report and respect for school district efforts.

METHODOLOGY

Overview. In order to maximize the return of data from shelters organized for the homeless, the 1989 census included participation of professionals at the state, regional and local levels. Research staff at the College of Human Environmental Sciences organized and made informational contacts to plan the census. Professionals in the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, in the Governor's office of the Coordinating Committee on the Homeless and in the regional University Extension Directors' offices all facilitated contacts and involvement of professionals in shelters, transitional housing organizations and referral centers.

After the identification of homeless shelters and confirmation of service to children, a census questionnaire was mailed to all known shelters and Human Development Corporations or Community Action Program agencies in 112 counties of Missouri (omitting St. Louis County and Jackson county which were contacted personally in a variety of ways). The questionnaire included a self-addressed envelope and in the case of shelters, information about Extension professionals who would be present on the census day to facilitate taking of the data.

The morning after the census, a group of professionals throughout the state contacted shelters by phone and visited on site to answer any remaining questions or mail questionnaires directly back to the office in Columbia. The research staff completed analysis of the data and the summary report.

Identification of Shelters and HDC and CAPS Agencies. The response list for the 1988 census of Missouri Homeless Children was used to generate an initial list of shelters. In addition a visit was made to the office of the Governor's Coordinating Committee on the Homeless to obtain a complete, statewide directory of their services to the homeless.

The research staff then called all of the HDC and CAPS regional offices to ask for names of specific Homeless shelters and homeless coordinators in their region. In Kansas City the homeless hotline and referral director and in St. Louis the director of the Homeless Office in the Mayor's office assisted in identification of new local shelters and transitional housing settings.

Once shelters were identified each shelter was called directly to validate their provision of services to children.

Recruitment of University Extension Personnel. Research staff met with the director of Family Strengths Programs and with the eight regional directors of Missouri's University Extension system. These directors supported the involvement of their staff members in the collection of data.

The research staff then met with a number of University resident faculty members to obtain specific recommendations for University regional specialists around Missouri with a known commitment to low resource families and families in significant transitions. With this list, research staff called all Extension persons recommended and invited them to participate in regional meetings and in completion of the actual census. In addition, presentations were made to several professional organizations concerned with human service and volunteers were solicited to assist with the census.

Regional Meetings. In October, meetings were held in Columbia, St. Louis, Kansas City, Poplar Bluff and the Springfield area to orient shelter personnel and extension professionals to the procedure planned for the census. During these meetings an effort was made to encourage communication between shelter staff and extension personnel so that each might understand more about the services within each system.

Discussion was held concerning the positive impact of the 1988 census and groups participated in the critique and development of the 1989 census questionnaire. It was agreed that a minimum number of questions be asked in order to facilitate cooperation from shelter personnel. It was felt that the qualitative data obtained in the 1988 census was an excellent documentation of the social and educational needs of these children and families. It was not believed that a repetition of the interview process would be a wise use of monies set aside to facilitate educational services for homeless children. In all of the area meetings shelter personnel gave excellent recommendations for improvement of the census process and clarification of the language of questionnaire.

Fiber-optics Cable Training on Census Procedure. On October 19th a fiber-optics cable conference was held from the campus facilities in Columbia, linking the studio facilities in Kansas City and St. Louis. At that time Extension personnel participated in an active discussion of the procedure for the census day. Because the 1988 census staff had significant problems getting questionnaires returned, it was considered important to facilitate the collection of questionnaires the day after the census. Therefore the decision was made to mail all questionnaires directly to the shelters or CAPS agencies and to follow up with phone contacts to make certain the questionnaires were in fact received. Campus and regional extension personnel agreed to participate in these follow-up calls. In order to reduce lost data, Extension personnel agreed to be present on site at the largest shelters on that evening to assist in taking the census or answer questions the next morning and facilitate the return of questionnaires.

After extensive discussion it was decided that the census would be held from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on the evening of Tuesday, November 14. This date was chosen to allow completion of data analysis by December 31, and to avoid a known service overload at the holiday season which reduces the available time for shelter staff to cooperate with the census. There was a general desire to take the census in the coldest winter months to accurately document the true level of homelessness. Shelter staff, however, commented that they do not see the weather significantly affecting the numbers of families who are homeless.

Response Rate. With the identification of shelters and assignment of professionals to support them on site, we received a return rate of 94% of all 66 identified shelters in Missouri. In addition, of the 112 counties who received questionnaires requesting reports from HDC or the CAPS agency homeless coordinators, we received a total of 34 who indicated they did serve children. Many of these latter questionnaires were not included in the census data because they recorded service to this population, but had no child census on the night of November 14.

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Overview. On November 14 1989, 776 children were counted as being housed in Missouri facilities for homeless persons. While the majority (81%) were housed in organized shelters, there is an increasing number of children housed in transitional housing services and in informal relationships provided in rural areas of the state where the homelessness population is not large enough to provide the impetus for organized shelters for homeless families.

Count of Homeless Children

Table 1. Number Of Homeless Children by Age and Race

Ages	Totals	Number of Children by Race				
Years		Black	White	Asian	Hisp	Na. Am
0-4	359	196	113	3	8	1
5	61	28	26	0	1	1
6-11	202	109	55	0	2	1
12-14	60	27	26	0	1	0
15	25	15	8	0	1	0
16-20	62	26	34	0	0	0

Table 2. Number of Homeless Children by Educational Status

Ages	Preschool/Elementary/Secondary School Attendance		
Years	Totals	In School	Not in School
0-4	359	37	314
5	61	36	22
6-11	202	176	15
12-14	60	43	6
15	25	20	3
16-20	62	26	25

Table 3. Number of Children Left Elsewhere by Parent On November 14, 1989

Age	Number
0-4 years	30
5 years	7
6-11 years	32
12-14	11
15	16
16-18	9

Contrary to expectations, children left elsewhere by parents were not only older children. Most shelter staff felt younger children living elsewhere were with other relatives.

Table 4. How typical was the census on November 14, 1989?

	Number	Percent
More people than average	10	13%
Average number of people	36	46%
Fewer people than average	32	41%

Approximately 41% of shelter staff felt that on November 14th fewer than average people were in their shelter.

Table 5. Number of teen parents and their children housed in shelters

Number of teen parents 79

Number of their children 80

Table 6. Number of families refused service in the 24 hours immediately proceeding November 14, 1989 173

Number of children refused service in the 24 hours immediately proceeding November 14, 1989 250

Shelter Data

Table 7. Facilities and services available for children ages 0 -11 years,

Facilities or services	Percentage of Shelters
None	3%
Playground	36%
Nap Area	30%
Toys	63%
Tutoring	16%
Chapter 1	--
Diapering Areas	19%
Day Care	15%
Head Start	9%
Case Management	53%
Infant formula and preparation and storage area	38%
High chairs for meals	49%
Home work area	31%
Play area (indoors)	33%
Child-sized toilets or Potty chairs	26%
In-between meal snacks	35%
Group sessions	24%
Developmental evaluations	21%

For shelters serving children most have few specialized equipment or services to assist in developmentally appropriate programming.

Table 8. Facilities and services for youth ages 12-20

Facilities or services	Percentage of Shelters
Playground	14%
Sports equipment	18%
Table games	24%
Lounge Area	34%
Study Area	33%
Group Sessions	24%
Vocational training	5%
Self-esteem classes	15%
Tutoring	18%
Evaluation	19%
Case Management	45%
Parenting information/classes	34%

For those serving youth, even fewer specialized services are available.

Table 9. Average Length of Stay In Shelter

Length of Stay	% of Shelters
Less than a week	8%
One week	2%
1 to 2 weeks	31%
15 days to 1 month	27%
32 days to 3 months	25%
95 days to 6 months	--
6 to 12 months	--
13 to 18 months or more	--

Fifty-one percent of shelters reported that the average stay for families was 1 week to 1 month.

Table 10. Average Length of Stay In Transitional Housing

Length of Stay	% of shelters
Less than a week	3%
1 to 2 weeks	8%
15 days to 1 month	11%
32 days to 3 months	31%
95 days to 6 months	19%
6 to 12 months	14%
13 to 18 months or more	3%

Fifty percent of the transitional programs reported that families' average stay was 1 to 6 months.

Table 11. Maximum Length of Stay In Shelters and Transitional Housing

	% of Shelters	% of Transitional Housing
30 days	45%	15%
31-90 days	21%	21%
90-180 days		17%
more than 180 days		9%

Only 66% of shelters reported that they had a maximum stay regulation. Sixty-two percent of the transitional housing programs reported a maximum stay policy.

Table 12. Sleeping capacity of shelter facilities

Capacity	Number of Shelters	Percentage of Shelters
0-15	24	30%
15-30	18	23%
30-60	12	16%
60-100	3	2.5%
More than 100	4	5

While there were only 7 shelters serving children who house more than 60 persons, they accounted for 69% of the children counted on November 14. The remaining 31% of the children are spread among 54 shelters which serve generally fewer than 30 people.

Table 13. The People Served By the Program

	% of Shelters
Men	64%
Women	86%
Families with Children (0-11 yrs)	94%
Families with Youth (12-20 yrs)	90%
Unaccompanied Minors	45%

Of the shelters reporting, 45% do not serve unaccompanied children.

Table 14. Program classification

	% of Shelters
Overnight shelter only	25%
Day shelter only	9%
24-hr. shelter	56%
Transitional housing program	50%
Referral center	82%

Shelters reported whatever services they provided. One quarter of those reported night shelter only--with no daytime programming.

Table 15. Census informants' position

Position	% of Informants
Administrator	82%
Case worker/social worker/educational worker	13%
Volunteers	5%

Most of the information was provided by administrators.

QUALITATIVE COMMENTS

Participation of Extension Personnel. The involvement of 40 regional Extension specialists and University resident faculty members was a vital key to the successful completion of the census. The 94% shelter return was excellent and the opportunity for Extension educators to observe and establish relationships with shelter personnel has provided opportunities for new services to this population. In some areas of the state Expanded Food and Nutrition Specialists and Youth Specialists had already been working in shelter programs. As shelter staff and Extension professionals interacted, a number of creative ideas were generated which can enrich services to this population in the future. An Extension 4-H Youth Specialist indicated the intention of providing a story hour in a shelter with participation from her 4-H group. Human Development Specialists provided some training to professionals who are assisting families in transition out of homeless shelters. An Expanded Food and Nutrition specialist identified additional shelter sites to present information on nutrition and management of food resources for the family.

The research staff felt an important objective of this collaborative effort was greater awareness and proliferation of services to this population. It appears already that this objective is being met. A questionnaire is being mailed in late December of 1989 to obtain specific data regarding follow-up efforts.

Interaction With Shelter Personnel. This census was a labor intensive process that involved repeated efforts to phone shelter personnel and obtain accurate information on their services and the population served. Because some of the research staff worked part-time, it was an exceedingly frustrating experience to make repeated phone calls and find the person with whom information was previously shared was not available the second time. Clearly shelters operate with limited resources and high stress. It was abundantly clear that office management resources are scarce around these facilities and accurate information in some settings can be obtained only by persons visiting on site. Depending on the education and professional orientation of shelter personnel, responses to the need to take the census and concern that it be accurately done were positive in most sites. A general concern about the institutionalization of the homeless and disrespect for their dignity repeatedly surfaced. This concern is shared by the research staff.

It was extremely important that approximately 45 persons were engaged in making phone and site visit contacts with the shelter personnel. Personal contact served to create trust and commitment to the completion of the census. All four shelters which did not return data were small, affiliated with private religious groups, and staffed mainly by volunteers. They did not receive personal visits by professionals engaged in taking the census prior to the November 14th event.

In contrast, a group of privately affiliated shelters which did not provide data last year was included in this year's census due to repeated personal contacts made by a member of the research staff.

Site Visits. It was particularly informative for the research team to visit shelters in St. Louis, Kansas City, Poplar Bluff, Joplin, and Springfield. On these visits, shelter staff were helpful in identifying materials and personnel resources needed to enhance the experiences of children involved in homelessness. An overwhelming

respect for the dedication and energy of staff presently serving the homeless was repeatedly felt.

EVALUATION CONFERENCE

On November 16 a fiber-optics cable conference was held through the Columbia facility with professionals who had participated in Columbia, Kansas City and St. Louis. Immediate procedural improvements of the census involved the wording of some questions. It was felt that some persons on shelter staffs were easily discouraged by the frank admission of the few specialized services in their facility available to children and youth. However an equal number of persons believed that reviewing the list of potential resources that might be offered, helped them in planning and requesting assistance for their shelter services. It was especially important to staff involved in taking the census that information was obtained about unaccompanied minors and about children left elsewhere by their parents. Generally the shelter staff were well aware of this practice and did provide good data.

While a greater number of older children were counted in this year's shelter census, it is still clear that it is largely a population of older male children that are left elsewhere. We are particularly concerned about the social impact of this population who are receiving so few services and such strong messages of censure and neglect.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT YEAR'S PROCESS

In 1990 there should be much more sensitivity for Homeless children because of the completion of the National Census. However, there are several specific recommendations made by participants for next year:

1. It is important to include in the census those children who are housed in facilities for the victims of domestic violence. It was very difficult for shelter personnel to count those children in shelters for the homeless and to know that many of those children had just come from shelters for the abused and may return to services of that kind. There is a real need to look at implications for the integration of these different service categories.

2. Common concerns around school attendance centered on both transportation and motivation/management skills of parents. If the LEA provides transportation services, but parents are stressed enough that they cannot help prepare their children consistently on schedule, then intervention needs to be centered on family support and parenting education.

3. Shelter workers expressed their concern for families who are "bunking up" with other families. Many shelter providers keep records or provide services to families who are minimally house or housed in very temporary conditions. They were concerned that these families should be included in the census count and it was not possible to do that with the 1989 definition.

4. A number of agency personnel reported interest in helping runaway youth who were obviously homeless. They felt they were not being adequately

served and too often ended up in detention facilities rather than shelters with a social/educational emphasis.

5. In compilations of racial data a mixed race column response was not provided which makes interpretation of the racial data suspect. A number of shelter providers felt that a large percentage of children who were in the homeless service category were of mixed racial parentage.

6. General concern was raised that a census date in January or February might give a more accurate picture of how much weather affects the number of homeless families.

7. A more vigorous process needs to be instituted to identify the differences between shelter emergency services and transitional housing services. Because there are increasingly special categories of funding available for different classes of service, we see a proliferation of different services offered. However language is used inconsistently and it is sometimes difficult to decide whether something is a transitional housing program or is in fact an emergency shelter. All children who are currently in a homeless state should be accurately counted, no matter what the specific category.

8. Shelter personnel expressed concern about the social environments of neighborhoods where homeless shelters exist. Many are in unsafe areas and therefore present supervision/freedom problems for children. Other shelter directors had encountered formal and informal censorship from neighborhoods. Shelter staff often do not have the time to engage in public relations campaigns of advocacy for their clients. These activities need to be engaged in by other organizations who understand the needs of this population.

9. The most often-repeated informal comments about service needs were for day care/Head Start for preschool children and tutoring for school-aged children. Since shelter staff were not formally asked to respond to this on the questionnaire, it was impressive that these two requests were so frequently voiced. Since 46% of this year's homeless count of preschool children, the impact of services to this group could be significant.

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